

CULTURAL IDENTITY: CONTEXTUALIZING AND SCAFFOLDING LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS

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Abstract: The K to 12 Curriculum recognized the existential relationship of language and culture thus establishing contextualization as its guiding principles. Hence, the study identified the significant impact of the local culture to language, perceptions of English teachers towards contextualization and factors on establishing meaningful situations in both oral and written discourse. Grounded theory and semi-structured interview, thematic analysis were utilized in the study which involved seven English teachers from the Division of Batangas City. Findings revealed that cultural identity plays a significant role as learners display Batangueño culture, identity, local beliefs through meaningful communication situations. Contextualization promotes improvement of learning outcomes, mastery and linguistic communicative value. Teachers shall consider the socio-cultural context of the learners, functional language and use of localized materials as they immerse their learners from local to indigenized situations and scaffold from simple to complex and specific learning context. The researcher proposed 3Is (Identify-Immerse-Indigenize), a three-level theoretical approach to contextualizing and scaffolding language learning process which is subjected for evaluation and validation.

Keywords: contextualization, cultural identity, language, scaffolding, grounded theory

1. Introduction

Language and culture have been the interweaving human foundation of growth and development. In the advent of human systems, both have been recognized as prerequisite and necessary coexistent of the other. Educational system has been putting a basic and scholastic emphasis of consideration of culture in the language learning. UNESCO affirmed the consideration of culture and its diverse in nature in 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Cultural diversity, not only on economic growth gains, but it helps to achieve intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. In the Philippines, the K to 12 Curriculum of the Department of Education recognized the existential relationship of language and culture. As mandated by Republic Act 10533, otherwise known as Basic Education Act of 2013, the curriculum shall enable localization and contextualization.

Barrot (2018), the current curriculum may need to improve its clarity, specificity, and internal coherence as well as the integration of some essential principles of 21st century learning and language teaching and learning which includes contextualization. In teaching in the basic education level, problems have been met when teaching focuses on the development of skills, i.e. (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) but contextualization is an area prematurely cultivated and teaching of cultural context should underscore in any of the language communication situations. Teachers are introduced to an abstract idea of contextualization but providing a concrete structure of scaffolding the process is a half-baked area where instruction shall focus on. Learners cultivate personal strength and pride, social importance and historical continuity as they interact in the context they belong to. Within this principle, teachers shall use this sense of identity to develop language development since language and cultural identity are interconnected (Mernagh, 2018).

In Batangas, learners use Tagalog as their mother tongue, closely related to national language, Filipino. Using

Batangueño culture and community learning resources are authentic areas to study the distinctive ways English teachers contextualize meaningful language instruction as they use this linguacultural aspect in learning English. The study focuses on the scaffolding techniques in language instruction as teachers are structuring learning activities and offering students support to contextualize instruction. The study explored on how local culture affect language learning and how teachers contextualize and establish meaningful language learning process. Contextualization has a promising direction for accelerating the language development. The research study aims to delve into grounding a theoretical approach on the contextualization of the language learning process since it relates into the transfer of skill in the cultural context.

2. Main Body

Literature Review

In response to contextualization, the implementation of Mother Tongue- Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), referring to “first-language-first” education, has been introduced in the curriculum to help learner transitions to additional languages particularly Filipino and English. It is meant to address the high functional illiteracy of Filipinos where language plays a significant factor. Because of the use of their mother tongue, children can participate actively in the learning process because they understand what is being discussed and what is being asked of them. They are able to construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts and add new concepts to what they already know. Additionally, pertaining to educational solutions relating to the focus of the study, Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones recognized Pivot 4A QuBe wherein the Region provides access more localized educational content that can stir their interest and creativity as the program paved the way for various contextualized programs. It highlighted the

development of valid and contextualized learning resources.

As a crucial response to this educational need, Reyes et al. (2019) suggested that to use the community resources. Teachers should use activities, events, issues or real materials to meet the needs of the students. When teachers use contextualized and local materials available within the community, it makes the lesson lively and appropriate on the students' level of understanding. Moreover, the teaching learning process shall use the situation within the community as starting point of the lesson to catch the attention and engagement of the students on school work. Emphasizing the relevance of contextualization, Contextualized Teaching and Learning (CTL) Approach is useful to increase mastery in learning competencies in Araling Panlipunan and recommended the approach to another grade level across various subject matter. This is a good consideration of the contextualization in language learning as well (Lorbis, 2019).

Nevertheless, contextualizing and scaffolding language process of English teachers in Batangas continue to be an educational challenge. As revealed in a study conducted among English teachers in Batangas, Mojares (2013) found out that English teachers often utilize lecture method and brainstorming as teaching strategies while community resources method is rated as moderately used. The use of various teaching strategies is proposed. It is deemed relevant that contextualization engages the students in teaching-learning process since they relate their situations on their lesson. However, teachers moderately use community resources and there is very little research on the relation between the contextualization of basic skills instruction and the expository scaffolding process to attain the level of contextualization: localization and indigenization.

Additionally, at present situation where students study within their home and community environment due to Covid-19, the study conforms to Deped Order No. 12 series 2020 entitled Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) where field implementers are encouraged to contextualize the learning content in order to accommodate the varying contexts of learners, culture and its learning environment to guarantee relevant and quality language education. In lieu of this, the study shall delve into perception and factors of contextualization in English language learning and establishing meaningful communication situations in teaching English in both oral and written discourse.

In the proposal of the research's solutions, the study defined and used the concepts of contextualization. Contextualization is the educational process of relating the curriculum to a setting, situation or area of application to make the competencies relevant, meaningful and useful to all learners. It includes indigenization and localization. Localization is the process of relating learning content specified in the curriculum to local information and materials in the learners' community. The lowest and genuine level of contextualization is indigenization. Indigenization is contextualization in relation to the bio-geographical, historical and socio-cultural context of the learner's community (Adopting the Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework, 2015).

Methodology

The study utilized qualitative design specifically, Grounded theory, a method used primarily to generate theory in which the researcher begins with a broad query in a particular topic area and then collects relevant information about the topic (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016). Semi-structured interview was used to explore on the instructional process and experience of English teachers and the process of their language instruction in terms of relevance of language and culture in the curriculum. Because of pandemic, open-ended interview questions were also distributed to collect qualitative data to develop a theory grounded in the data gathered from participants. Systematic analysis was used. Open coding, axial coding and selective coding were performed.

Results

This part presents the results and discussion pertaining to the objectives of the study. The study delved into significant impact of culture to language learning, perspective of English teachers on contextualization in English language learning, factors to consider in contextualizing the lesson. Moreover, the study thrives to identify the ways on which English teachers are establishing meaningful communication situations in teaching English. Several themes have emerged from the qualitative data gathered.

Objective 1: To identify significant impact of culture to language learning

Theme 1: Display of local culture in oral and written communication activities. The impact of culture in language learning has long been recognized in the instruction process. People tend to learn language because they are immersed in a certain culture. Simultaneously, culture has also flourished because of the use of language. In scaffolding the language learning process, it is critical to start where the learners are. In lieu of this, the participants revealed that in the aspects of language learning in the basic education level, learners were able to display and showcase a certain aspect of culture, specifically, Batangueño culture in different learning tasks. Language learners were able to put culture in the process of language learning in both oral and written activity such as formal conversation. Within this principle, teachers shall use this sense of identity to cultivate language development since language and cultural identity are interconnected (Mernagh, 2018).

“ In formal conversation, speech and essay writing. They can showcase those Batangueño culture through oral and written activity. Learning becomes meaningful to them by letting them engage themselves into the situation wherein they can easily relate with.”

“Learner's Culture is reflected in writing stories or presenting a role play.”

Three of the participants shared the reflection of local culture in the instructional phase. Grade 12 English teacher who is teaching Creative non-fiction emphasized that she often sees the aspect of culture in the output stories of the students. This is basically because, human thinks and learns through language, which is governed by rules and systems (language conventions) which eventually puts emphasis on meaning.

Theme 2: Share of local beliefs through meaningful communication situations. Findings show that when teachers developed communicative situations in a cultural framework, learners were able to share the local culture since culture puts its imprint on the conversational and narrative styles of the members of a social group. Truly, these styles are generally considered to form part of people's cultural identities. Individual's cultural representation of an individual can be observed through the use of language in particular context.

"In sharing their beliefs and even in manner of speaking. Their behaviors and values are also part of it."

"I establish meaningful communication situation in teaching English both oral and written by providing the learners a safe environment where they would feel comfortable to open up and express their thoughts and ideas. I allow the students to ask questions if they need help."

The teachers recognized that when teachers structure or restructure the context of learning incorporating a certain framework very relatable and comfortable to them, learners were able to share and express their thoughts and ideas. As they share their thoughts and ideas, the influence of culture on human minds is not only reflected in the human personality expressed but also the way they behave and speak as per the existing norms of society. This is aligned to an important conclusion about language learning and culture of Drew et. al. (2018) who cited that the social standpoint of learning covers the aspect of situated cognition that learning is embedded within specific contexts.

Theme 3: Demonstration of local identity in the learning process. Three participants shared that learners were able to show their Batangueño identity in the language learning process. Specifically, learners were acquiring and speaking English language as influenced by their native tongue and socio-cultural context thus resulting to sociolinguistic variation. Batangueño tone and accent in speaking English is reflected as well as their culture, humour and beliefs. Drummond (2010) supported this variation which is influenced by a variety of linguistic and social factors, creating identifiable patterns.

"Even the Batangueño are speaking in English their tone cannot be denied that they are a Batangueno, in writing, it reflects their culture and beliefs through inclusion of Batangueno ways and humour."

"Having this Batangueño identity helps the learners attain proficiency in the language in such a way that they can express themselves more naturally. They are more comfortable when sharing their thoughts and ideas if their Batangueño identity is being considered."

Because the teacher has been establishing comfortable context in the language learning process in which learners can identify, they were able to express themselves more naturally and share their thoughts and ideas and eventually attaining the proficiency in the language. Drummond further hold the emphasis this important link between variationist sociolinguistics and language acquisition. Through imposing this link, there would be appreciation of the processes involved in driving these patterns of acquisition and begin to determine their significance in terms of greater linguistic knowledge, understanding and application.

Objective two: To explore on the perspectives of English teachers on contextualization in English language learning

Theme 1: Contextualization promotes improvement of learning outcomes. Contextualization is observed when learning tasks and activities are designed for learners to acquire the language in authentic and meaningful contexts of use. English teachers took highly on the concepts of contextualization as it improve the teaching and learning outcomes. Whether conscious or unconscious, teachers usually use the process of contextualization because when learners are immersed in a given situation, they tend to behave one way in one situation and use another in different context to achieve learning outcomes. In the teaching learning process, it may mean including learners' past and current experiences, as well as their future aspirations.

"... because I know that it can highly improve teaching and learning outcomes. We appreciate the effects of contextualization even in our daily lives although we may not be conscious about it. We behave in one way in one situation, while we may use another set of behavior in a different context."

Theme 2: Contextualization contributes to understanding and mastery of the lesson. All of the teacher-participants identified that contextualization contributes to understanding and mastery of the lesson. It is developing new skills, knowledge, abilities, and attitudes in students presenting new subject matter in meaningful and relevant context: context of previous experience, real-life and workplace. This is the mere reason that K-12 curriculum in English (2016) follows a similar guiding principle that by learning and incorporating new language structures into their repertoire and using them in a variety of contexts, students develop language fluency, grammatical correctness and proficiency. All of the participants expressed that it helps students learn easier, concepts are easily and better understood.

"Students learn through contextualization, it's because English language can easily be learned if evident and relevant to the students. Delivery the lesson suited to the learner."

"... because it helps make the students learn easier. And it helps the learner understand the concepts better."

Theme 3. Contextualization gives language a real communicative value. Among the findings of the study, one emergent theme is identified. One participant shared that contextualization give a real communicative value to the language. This is anchored to Parba (2018) notion that it was desirable to incorporate sociolinguistic topics to develop students' critical perspectives of language variation, national languages, and identities. English teachers were able to teach English oral and written communication activities using springboards innate to them. As they develop language proficiency, they were able to take pride on their cultural identity such as cultural context, knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, values, and symbols, manner of speaking.

"It is really necessary to contextualize English language to give real communicative value to the language that learners meet."

Objective 4: To explore on the factors to consider in contextualizing the lesson

Theme 1: Socio-cultural context of the learners. Identifying the context of the learner makes the language learning process learner's centered, focusing on individual learners—their social norms, beliefs, apprehensions, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs—with a focus on learning. This can also be about identifying and using areas of strength and weakness to tailor learning experiences at the individual and group level. Four participants were able to identify socio-cultural context of the learners in the contextualization process. This is very important in the beginning and scaffolding of the learning process. They design lessons and create activities in which students can share their past and current experiences. Situating themselves in a cultural input and a familiar background, students can easily identify themselves based on what is designed and created in a communicative situation, they could easily comprehend, immersed and learn.

"I make activities wherein my students can share their past or current experiences in life, as well as their future aspirations. In that way, I will be able to design a lesson that will be suited for all types of learners."

Theme 2: Functional language. In the contextualization process, teachers shall also explore on the functional language. This is the language that learners need in different day-to-day situations. Contextualization provides real-life situations in which students can interact in, thus developing greater functional language in the learning process. A participant takes a simpler view of contextualization as providing simple to complex activities in which students will be exposed not only on grammatical forms but how language can function in different functions, such as giving instructions or giving an opinion.

"Contextualization can be as simple as providing an example sentence that uses new word or as complex as preparing a role play to practice functional language. Guessing meaning from the context is one of my method."

Theme 3: Use of localized materials. Contextualization has to level which are Localization and indigenization. The role of culture in materials used in the language classrooms is a real learning necessity. When learners recognize their cultural context and identity in the learning material, and immerse on the discourse communities, literacy events and communicative situations in the frame of their cultural context, they bring language under the own context and native to an area. In the language learning, the presence of indigenous knowledge and culture is reflected in the process. In order to contextualize the lesson, participants of the study used locality sources and materials and even made revisions on the activities given to the students. This is complementary to Sumaryono and Ortiz (2004) caution to the English teachers who do not display sensitivity toward cultural identity. If this happens, English language learners could become invisible in the mainstream classroom or even disconnect from the learning process.

"I contextualize my lessons from materials to be used down to its activities and presentation, I consider the materials available and important to the discussion."

Objective 4: To explain how English teachers establish

meaningful communication situations in teaching English

Theme 1: Immersing learners to local and real-life situations. Through immersing and scaffolding literacy practices, the language learning process establishes general cultural ways of using literacy in oral and written language which learners draw upon in their own lives. Teachers provides learners' common social practices to local and real-life situations. Participants heard that they begin in what the learners already know at home, situations that are familiar in the community of the learners. The knowledge that goes into literacy events draws on the larger cultural and historical context of production and reception of texts in a particular discourse community. Participants scaffold language learning opportunities that are relevant and relatable to learners. They are engaging students in social interactions to enable learning and understanding students as individual learners, learners in a small group setting and learners in a larger social setting Knestrack (2013).

"I give that uses local practices as language learning opportunity is "Communication Origami" This is a great exercise to help the learners understand that we all hear and interpret things differently, even if we are given the exact same information. The information given to students can be based on local situations."

Participants have agreed to the essentiality to find meaningful and relatable ways to incorporate the richness of students' local cultural backgrounds into the curriculum content. When students are immersed to the local and real-life situation, they tend to incorporate their local knowledge and indigenize the learning process. Ingenious knowledge and practices emerge and realized throughout the learning process. In lieu of this, Republic Act 10533 otherwise known as Basic Education Act of 2013, language learning should be flexible enough to enable and allow schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the same based on their respective educational and social context.

Theme 2: Scaffolding from simple to complex, relatable and specific learning situations. Language learners learned when they are guided through the scaffolding process starting from modelling. Participants recognized this learning stages of giving students drills, reading lines, sentences and paragraphs in the beginning of the process. Then, new concepts need to be bridged. Teachers weave new information into existing mental structures of learning situations that scaffold diverse learners in a safe and nurturing environment, which motivates students to take the necessary risks to be successful. Participants let students reading lines, sentences, and paragraphs to make sure that they students speak. Skills such as vocabulary development, comprehension skills activities, viewing, reading and writing. In the scaffolding process where her students are immersed in language situations called IDyolek, one participant was also able to identify an indigenous content from the learners.

... for example subjects like Filipino sa Piling Larang where there is IDyolek, individual way of a speaker with regards to tone and delivery identifying him or her identity.

"...I begin with what they already know at home, situations that are simple and relatable to the learners in community."

3. Conclusion

In the contextualizing language learning process, cultural identity plays a significant role as learners are able to display of local culture and identity in oral and written communication activities and share of local beliefs through meaningful communication situations. Teachers has positive perception on contextualization believing that it promotes improvement of learning outcomes, contributes to understanding and mastery of the lesson and gives language a real communicative value. In contextualizing activities, they consider the socio-cultural context of the learners, functional language and use of localized materials. The process of contextualization involves immersing learners to local, real-life and indigenized situations, and scaffolding from simple to complex, relatable and specific learning situations. With these emerging themes, the researcher proposed 3Is (Identify-Immerse-Indigenize), a three-level theoretical approach to contextualizing and scaffolding language learning process.

However, this is a preliminary study on exploring the local cultural identity in the language learning process. Further investigation can be conducted on how local cultural identity affect the macro skills development in the language acquisition. Moreover, research development on the proposed theoretical approach on contextualization and student language learning outcomes on the proposed approached are recommended.

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Author Profile

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